

As a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in North Dakota, I urge you to oppose HB 1332.

I graduated from NDSU's Couple and Family Therapy program with a Master of Science in 2009. My thesis project was on the Ethics of Conversion Therapy. A copy still resides in the library on NDSU's campus.

The Social Work Licensure Board should be allowed to be the experts in their field. The legislature should not create laws trying to supersede the Administrative Rule process. There is no robust evidence supporting the efficacy of conversion therapy, and a plethora of evidence of its harm. The Social Work Licensure board made the right call to ban the practice.

The practice of conversion therapy is so harmful many states have laws making the practice illegal. California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Virginia, Vermont, Washington, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico all have laws or regulations protecting youth from this harmful practice. Eight of these state laws or regulations were enacted under Republican governors.

Many professional organizations have made statements explicitly against conversion therapy including:

The American Academy of Pediatrics  
The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American College of Physicians  
American Counseling Association  
American Medical Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
American School Counselor Association  
American School Health Association  
National Association of Social Workers  
Just the Facts Coalition  
World Psychiatric Association  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

I don't think the authors of this bill know what conversion therapy entails and how harmful it can be. Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people who have undergone conversion therapy are almost twice as likely to attempt suicide than those who did not participate in conversion therapy. It's 92% higher over the course of their lifetime. Many report years of trauma therapy after conversion therapy experiences.

This is not a bill that recognizes or appreciates a diverse population of North Dakotans and will result in loss of community members. It does not make North Dakota a desirable place to

live and is not reflective of the values that most North Dakotans hold toward their friends, neighbors and family members.

I strongly urge you to oppose HB 1332.